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FOREIGN AGRICULTURE CIRCULAR

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Foreign Agricultural Service Washington D.C.



WORLD SHEEP NUMBERS

INCREASE SLIGHTLY

World sheep numbers increased 2 percent, or about 15 million head, in 1957. Numbers now total around 917 million head, 10 percent more than the 1951-55 average, and are the largest on record.

Most of the increase in sheep during 1957 was in the U.S.S.R., where there were 120 million on January 1, 1958, according to official sources. This was 11 percent above a year earlier, and 32 percent more than the 1951-55 average. The U.S.S.R. has more sheep than any country except Australia. Large areas are well adapted to sheep production and special encouragement is being given to livestock production. Grazing conditions have been favorable. Apparently sheep are increasing faster than the large number of goats. A growing percentage of the sheep are fine wool types.

NUMBER OF SHEEP in relation to NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN MAJOR WORLD AREAS

	Sheep per 1,000 persons
Oceania	12,271
South America	1,058
Africa	698
U.S.S.R.	440
Eastern Europe	356
Western Europe	276
North America	169
Asia	114
World average (1951-55)	<hr/> 320

During 1957 numbers increased slightly in the United States, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, Western Europe, and Africa. There was practically no change in Central America, Southwest Asia, and South and East Asia. There was a slight decrease in Eastern Europe and a larger percentage decline in Australia.

There was a sharp increase in sheep numbers in Red China during 1951-55, according to Communist sources, and the increase probably continued in 1956 and 1957. Chinese sheep numbers are estimated from officially announced figures for sheep and goats combined.

Numbers in Australia and New Zealand total 19 percent above the 1951-55 average. They are up 14 percent in Asia (excluding the U.S.S.R.), 7 percent in Africa, and 2 percent in Eastern Europe. The total in North America is about equal to the 1951-55 average. But numbers are down 3 percent in South America and 4 percent in Western Europe.

Wool Exporting Areas

In the 5 principal wool exporting countries of the Southern Hemisphere--Argentina, Uruguay, Union of South Africa, Australia and New Zealand--numbers did not change much during 1957 and are now 10 percent greater than the 1951-55 average. Sheep in Argentina and Uruguay are considerably below the 1951-55 average but are above it in the other 3 countries. Sheep numbers apparently declined in Australia during 1957 after reaching an all-time peak of 150 million head. Widespread drought resulted in large slaughter of aged ewes following a number of years when producers held animals from slaughter because of good grazing conditions and profitable returns to producers. Sheep production is still relatively profitable in New Zealand, and numbers are increasing there.

Argentine sheep numbers are generally at the lowest levels since before World War II. The reported 45.7 million head of sheep and lambs on farms in 1957 was slightly greater than a year earlier but below estimates for 1942, 1947, 1952 and 1954. Increases in Patagonia has accounted for this slight rise in sheep numbers. In the grain producing areas of Argentina, numbers are below last year.

Numbers in Uruguay are increasing from a low point reached in 1956. Part of this increase is due to an unusually large carryover of lambs this year. Numbers in the Union of South Africa are currently estimated at about 40 million head, although no census has been taken since 1954.

Areas of Large Sheep Numbers

Although sheep are widely distributed throughout the world, most of them are concentrated in a few countries. About 62 percent are in 10 countries, each of which has over 23.5 million head. The leading countries, in order, are Australia, the U.S.S.R., Communist China, Argentina, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, India, the United States, Turkey, and Uruguay. An additional 18 percent are in 10 other countries with 12.5 million to over 23 million head per country. In order of size they are Iran, Brazil, Ethiopia (including Eritrea), Spain, the United Kingdom, Morocco, Peru, Afghanistan, French West Africa, and Rumania.

Hair Sheep

Some of the world's sheep do not produce wool but are hair sheep which are largely confined to Africa and Asia. They are not shorn but are kept as meat animals, and in some cases for their milk. The brown hair sheep of India and the Persian Blackheads of Africa are 2 types of hair sheep. Apparently the feed and climatic conditions under which these hair sheep are raised do not permit wool sheep to survive, reproduce and grow a fleece. The various types of hair sheep do not cross with goats, and make up a specific species. Hair sheep are included with woolled sheep in this summary, but goats are excluded.

SHEEP: Estimated world total, by continent or area,
 averages 1936-40 and 1946-50, annual 1956 and 1957

Continent or area	Average			1957	1/	1958	1/	Change
	1936-40	1946-50	1951-55					from 1957 to 1958
	Thousand	Thousand	Thousand					Percent
North America	59,700	42,800	39,047	38,703		39,237		+1
Europe	120,100	104,100	119,699	116,129		117,232		+1
U.S.S.R.	66,000	67,700	91,100	108,000		120,100		+11
Asia	156,700	148,000	164,509	186,219		188,012		+1
South America	100,900	116,900	125,493	121,793		121,974		--
Africa	100,200	99,000	131,027	139,068		140,277		+1
Oceania	144,000	136,300	159,525	192,188		190,104		-1
Total	747,600	714,800	830,400	902,100		916,936		+2

1/ Preliminary

Carpet Wool

In large areas of the U.S.S.R., Communist China, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, other Asian countries, and in Africa many of the wool sheep produce unimproved coarse fleeces which are not fine nor uniform enough for spinning into fine yarns for worsted fabrics. These wools are generally referred to as carpet wools because of their primary use. However, they can be used to make coarse types of apparel fabric. Many of the sheep producing carpet wool have light fleeces, sometimes averaging as low as 1 or 2 pounds per head compared with an average yield of 8 pounds per fleece in the United States where practically all of the sheep produce apparel wool.

Goats

Goats are most numerous on the continents where hair sheep and coarse wool sheep are common. Over three-quarters of the world's goats are found in Asia (excluding U.S.S.R.) and Africa. There is roughly 1 goat to each 3 sheep in the world.

Sheep-People Ratio

A study shows a much larger variation in the number of sheep per 1,000 persons in the various countries of the world than in the case of either cattle or hogs.

SHEEP: Number in specified countries, average 1951-55, annual 1956-58; human population and number of sheep per 1,000 inhabitants, average 1951-55

Countries	Sheep numbers					Human population average 1951-55	Number per 1,000 people average 1951-55
	Month of estimate	Average 1951-55	1956	1957 2/	1958 2/		
	1/	1/	1/	1/	1/		
		Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	
NORTH AMERICA:							
Canada (Excluding Newfoundland) ..	Dec. 1 1/	1,087	1,181	1,079	1,112	14,822	73
Mexico.....	Spring	5,010	5,300	5,350	5,360	28,083	179
United States.....	Jan. 1	31,491	31,273	30,840	31,328	159,742	197
Total Canada, Mexico, U. S. and possessions.....		37,737	37,880	37,396	37,927	205,824	183
Guatemala.....		808	756	---	---	3,069	263
Total Central America.....		881	838	838	838	9,677	91
Cuba.....	Dec. 31 1/	191	210	210	210	5,830	33
Total Caribbean.....		429	467	469	472	15,004	29
Total North America.....		39,047	39,185	38,703	39,237	230,505	169
SOUTH AMERICA:							
Argentina.....	June 30	4/50,561	45,166	45,738	---	18,389	2,750
Bolivia.....	5/	6,164	---	---	---	3,125	2,068
Brazil.....	Dec. 31 1/	16,112	18,488	20,000	21,000	55,803	289
Chile.....	June 1	6,622	6,510	---	---	6,155	1,026
Colombia.....	Jan. 1	4/ 1,317	1,128	---	---	12,117	109
Ecuador.....		4/1,476	---	---	---	3,489	423
Falkland Islands.....		4/ 589	598	---	---	2	294,500
Paraguay.....		216	193	---	---	1,497	144
Peru.....	4/36,305	16,505	---	---	---	9,040	1,804
Uruguay.....	May	4/25,662	22,954	---	---	2,534	10,127
Total South America.....		125,493	119,645	121,793	121,974	118,600	1,058
EUROPE:							
Austria.....	Dec. 3 1/	318	255	227	207	6,958	46
Belgium.....	Jan 1	114	103	104	108	9,228	12
Denmark.....	July	43	33	34	34	4,370	10
Finland.....	June 15	975	566	---	---	4,142	235
France.....	Oct. 1 1/	7,725	8,216	8,355	8,575	42,659	181
Germany, West 6/	Dec. 3 1/	1,486	1,188	1,116	1,127	52,172	28
Greece.....	Dec. 31 1/	7,855	9,070	9,187	9,300	7,811	1,006
Ireland.....	Jan.	2,118	2,484	2,560	2,870	2,940	720
Italy.....	Dec. 1 1/	9,957	8,572	8,526	8,507	47,512	209
Netherlands.....	May	391	433	485	---	10,501	37
Norway.....	June 20	1,955	1,826	1,821	---	3,360	582
Portugal.....		5,200	---	---	---	8,621	603
Spain.....	Spring	25,223	---	---	---	28,529	884
Sweden.....	June 1	208	157	130	---	7,168	29
Switzerland.....	Apr. 24	188	201	200	200	4,869	39
United Kingdom.....	Dec. 1 1/	16,428	17,199	17,442	18,701	50,622	325
Total West Europe.....		80,694	79,590	76,116	77,539	291,960	276
Bulgaria.....	Dec. 1/	7,763	7,829	7,596	---	7,398	972
Czechoslovakia.....	Jan. 1	882	1,000	956	---	12,816	69
Germany, East.....	Dec. 3 1/	1,459	1,807	1,893	---	18,172	80
Hungary.....	March	1,597	1,930	1,873	---	9,559	167
Poland.....	June	3,442	4,223	---	---	26,266	131
Rumania.....	Jan.	10,903	11,120	---	---	16,862	647
Yugoslavia.....	Jan 15	11,259	11,360	10,622	10,700	17,083	659
Total East Europe.....		39,005	40,969	39,983	39,693	109,463	356
Total Europe.....		119,699	120,559	116,129	117,232	401,423	298
U.S.S.R. (Europe and Asia) 1/.....		91,100	---	108,000	120,100	207,000	440

SHEEP: Number in specified countries, average 1951-55, annual 1956-58; human population and number of sheep per 1,000 inhabitants, average 1951-55--Continued

Countries	Sheep numbers					Human population average 1951-55	Number sheep per 1,000 people average age 1951-55
	Month of estimate	Average 1951-55	1956	1957 2/	1958 2/		
	1/	1/	1/	1/	1/		
	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Thousands	Number
AFRICA:							
Algeria.....	Nov. 20 1/	5,850	6,298	6,384	---	9,297	629
Egypt.....	Jan. 1	4/1,240	---	---	---	21,945	57
Ethiopia and Eritrea.....		19,000	20,000	---	---	20,000	950
Sudan.....		4/5,800	6,946	6,900	---	8,820	658
Tunisia.....	Dec. 31 1/	3,013	3,045	2,891	3,026	3,629	830
Total North Africa.....		58,709	61,994	61,210	61,491	76,631	766
Angola.....	Dec. 31 1/	127	121	118	120	4,205	30
Belgium Congo & Ruanda Urundi.....	Dec. 31 1/	4/939	996	1,147	1,180	16,213	58
French Equatorial Africa.....		4/984	966	---	---	4,537	217
French West Africa.....		4/11,050	---	---	---	17,435	634
Kenya.....		3,308	---	---	---	4,479	739
Madagascar.....	Dec. 31 1/	342	342	---	---	5,855	58
Mozambique.....	Dec. 31 1/	77	74	---	---	5,900	13
Rhodesia and Nyassaland.....	Dec. 31 1/	471	449	452	---	6,708	70
Tanganyika.....	Dec. 1/	2,678	2,740	2,950	---	8,069	706
Togo.....		268	---	---	---	1,044	257
Uganda.....		1,080	1,136	1,120	---	5,343	202
Total Central Africa.....		31,025	32,517	33,228	33,646	96,222	322
Basutoland.....		1,418	---	---	---	613	2,313
Bechuanaland.....		4/197	---	---	---	318	619
South West Africa.....		4/3,267	3,100	---	---	438	7,459
Union of South Africa.....	Aug. 31	36,380	---	40,000	---	13,183	2,760
Total South Africa.....		41,293	44,020	44,630	45,140	14,759	2,804
Total Africa.....		131,027	138,531	139,068	140,277	187,612	698
ASIA:							
Cyprus.....	Dec. 1/	4/329	385	---	---	506	650
Iran.....		17,130	22,000	23,000	---	20,713	827
Iraq.....		9,240	10,000	8,500	---	4,967	1,860
Syria.....	Dec. 31 1/	3,455	4,340	5,300	---	3,548	874
Turkey (Europe and Asia).....		25,709	26,444	27,924	27,924	22,811	1,127
Total South-West Asia.....		60,155	67,547	69,526	69,761	70,098	862
China, Mainland 8/.....	June 30	35,260	46,100	---	---	582,603	61
Total East Central Asia 9/.....		41,270	52,110	53,510	55,010	602,313	69
India.....		39,237	38,700	---	---	372,004	105
Indonesia.....		2,457	2,781	---	---	79,740	31
Japan.....	Feb.	647	893	945	1,000	86,720	7
Total South and East Asia.....		63,084	63,108	63,183	63,241	767,300	82
Total Asia.....		164,509	182,765	186,219	188,012	1,439,711	114
OCEANIA:							
Australia.....	Mar. 31	122,822	139,124	149,802	147,000	8,812	13,938
New Zealand.....	June 30	36,698	40,255	42,382	---	2,044	17,954
Total Oceania.....		159,525	179,384	192,188	190,104	13,000	12,271
Total World 9/.....		830,400	883,569	902,100	916,936	2,597,840	320

1/ Census or estimate for year shown except that end of year (October-December) is included under following year for comparison and totals. 2/ Preliminary. 3/ FAO estimates; for some countries data are shown for 1953. 4/ Average 2 to 4 years. 5/ One year only. 6/ Excludes West Berlin. 7/ Unofficial estimates based on the total number of sheep and goats except 1953 and 1958 which were official estimates. 8/ Communist estimates; includes 22 provinces, Manchuria, Sinkiang (Turkestan) and Tibet. Assumes that half of the total number reported for sheep and goats are sheep. Excludes Outer Mongolia. 9/ Includes estimate for Outer Mongolia.

Prepared or estimated on the basis of official statistics of foreign governments, other foreign source material, reports of U. S. Agricultural Attachés and Foreign Service Officers, results of office research and related information. Estimated totals, include allowance for any missing data for countries shown and for other producing countries not shown. Foreign Agricultural Service 1958.

This might be expected as there is a negative correlation between the number of sheep and human beings in a given area. Sheep are pastoral animals, found in the relatively uninhabited grass and waste lands of the world. In addition, the wool which they produce is a relatively valuable commodity and easily stored and transported. As such, it is well adapted to areas far removed from the large centers of consumption. This inverse relationship between population and sheep numbers accounts for the wide divergencies in sheep per 1,000 people recorded, ranging from 294,500 sheep per 1,000 persons in the Falkland Islands to 7 per 1,000 people in Japan.

The countries or areas with more sheep than people are: the Falkland Islands (295:1), New Zealand (18:1), Australia (14:1), Uruguay (10:1), South West Africa (7:1), Union of South Africa (3:1), Basutoland (2:1), Iraq (2:1), and Peru (2:1). Turkey and Greece also have slightly more sheep than people.

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WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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